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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 002226

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DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP AND EUR/PGI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/14/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: G/TIP MESSAGE: MORE WORK NEEDED IN GREECE

Classified By: Political Counselor Robin Quinville  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

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1. (C) In a series of meetings in late October with MFA, MOJ, police contacts and NGOs, G/TIP and EUR/PGI representatives discussed the GOG's efforts to combat trafficking in persons (TIP). The Greeks pushed hard for Greece's inclusion in Tier One in the 2008 TIP Report. U.S. representatives acknowledged Greek efforts and lauded Greek successes but noted continuing problems, including limited victim identification, ongoing prosecution of victims, early or easy release of convicted traffickers, under funding of NGOs, and no action for two years on a public awareness campaign. It was unclear whether GOG officials understood that unless there was positive movement on these issues, Greece risked an eventual downgrade, not upgrade, in its status. We will make sure they get the message and focus on the essentials necessary not only to stay at Tier Two, but to reach their Tier One goal. End summary.

GOG OFFICIALS: UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

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2. (SBU) On October 24, G/TIP representative Brittany Brown and EUR/PGI Representative Jody Buckneberg met with MFA A7 Director of the North American Desk Greg Vassilokonstandakis, Director of Emergency Humanitarian and Food Aid for Hellenic Aid (YDAS) Niki Koutrakou, Trafficking in Persons Expert Advisor to YDAS Hercules Moskoff, Ioanna Efthimiadou Director of Cabinet for the Secretary General of the MFA, and Danny Esdras, representative of IOM in Greece. During the meeting, Brown and Buckneberg received a not-so-subtle message from Vassilokonstandakis that Greece believed it merited placement onto Tier One in the 2008 TIP report. Vassilokonstandakis said the number of arrests had increased, as had the length of sentences for traffickers (although he cited no specific statistics); he referred to the interministerial committee that deals with trafficking (although it reportedly had not met since March 2007), and to a "recent" public awareness campaign (aired in 2005), as well as to "recent fruitful police operations."

3. (C) Brown and Buckneberg congratulated Greece on its successes, while stressing remaining areas of concern, including victims still being punished alongside traffickers, identification of a relatively low overall number of victims, short sentences imposed on traffickers, access to bail for unreasonably long periods of time, as well as insufficient availability of reliable TIP statistics. On the final point,

MFA officials said they would be open to training from USG officials on how the U.S. gathers TIP-related data.

14. (SBU) On October 26, (after a day of meetings in Thessaloniki) Brown and Buckneberg met with Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Secretary General Panos Panouris and separately with the former (recently-promoted) Chief of the Greek Anti-Trafficking unit and members of her team. The MOJ officials discussed their desire to increase cooperation with anti-TIP NGOs as well as to see more training for officers throughout Greece in victim identification and other TIP related issues. Panouris also said that the interministerial committee on TIP was scheduled to meet within weeks.

NGOS: SOME IMPROVEMENT BUT FUNDING STILL PROBLEMATIC  
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15. (SBU) Brown and Buckneberg also met with trafficking NGO leaders, who noted some improvements as well as problems (such as under funding). NGO KLIMAKA director Eva Roussou said that there were problems getting sufficient funding from the GOG to run her shelter and its related programs. The GOG required NGOs requesting assistance of more than 100K euro to guarantee they already held at least half that amount in their back accounts. This was impossible, she said, adding that in addition to this requirement (which forced them to request less than 100K euro) the GOG also required NGOs to cover 25 percent of the total budget through self-funding -- also a nearly impossible task. She complained about submitting receipts for expenses to be reimbursed later rather than being given up-front grants for programs, which she had been told was "too bureaucratic."

16. (SBU) Nevertheless, some things were improving. Most notably, Roussou said her staff had been called in advance of

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a major trafficking operation by the Athens Vice Squad Anti-TIP team last July, a first. Nearly 60 women were arrested in the operation; KLIMAKA staff were able to interview many (though no all) of the women. She noted, however, that the police kept the women in offices and corridors in the police station with the 20-30 men arrested at the same time as traffickers.

17. (SBU) Amcit Emma Skjonsby at the faith-based NGO Nea Zoi (New Life) (whose members are among the only people in the streets and going into brothels to speak to women working in prostitution) said there had been a climb in numbers over the last three years in African women -- especially from the State of Ido in Nigeria -- who have been trafficked into Greece. Skjonsby spoke of a new program being run between Greece and Nigeria for women who wish to return to their homes. (Note: This may present an opportunity for cooperation between Embassy Athens and Embassy Abuja. End note.) Her staff also described promising new cooperation with a deportation detention center which allows her staff access. Skjonsby expressed concern about the detention and deportation of TIP victims, commenting that victims complained about mistreatment and abuse while in police custody.

LEGAL PROBLEMS AS WELL  
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18. (SBU) Greek attorneys specializing in trafficking agreed on what issues were most critical. Former IV Eleni Glegle and Greek Council of Refugees lawyer Vassilis Terzidis cited the lack of minimum bail amounts for incarcerated traffickers and the ability of too many defendants to remain free during lengthy appeals or to later pay fines in lieu of serving jail time. But, according to Glegle, the most serious problem was societal acceptance and public awareness about TIP issues. She saw a need to improve awareness among officials and the general public. Glegle also believed that punishment for the customers of trafficked women should increase.

¶9. (SBU) For Terzidis, the greatest danger was two-fold: the fact that there had been virtually no training of judges and prosecutors outside Athens and Th(heavy case loads of mQ appropriate to have jury trials for trafficking cases. "After all, he said, "the whole purpose of trafficking is money laundering but this crime is very rarely, if ever, prosecuted in trafficking cases." Terzidis also suggested that the GOG should start using its forfeiture laws against traffickers' assets.

COMMENT

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¶10. (C) While Greek officials have made plain (at every opportunity) their desire to be in Tier One on the 2008 Trafficking in Persons Report, they are overlooking real concerns that must be addressed. We will continue to engage with the GOG and encourage them to look realistically at the likelihood of a TIP Report upgrade/downgrade and to renew their commitment to a massive public awareness campaign, better victim identification (especially to ensure that victims are not being incarcerated or punished for crimes committed as a result of thQr being traffickQ, better cooperation with NGOs, possible ways for convicted traffickers to remain in jail pending appeal, and better statistics gathering. Greece may be eligible for Tier One in the not-too-distant future, but Greek officials need to stop resting on their recent laurels and show positive results.

¶11. (U) This message has been cleared by Ms. Brown and Ms. Buckneberg.  
COUNTRYMAN